



PRESS RELEASE

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Saudi Health Care Professionals Return from Successful U. S. Visit New Partnership to Boost Public Awareness of Breast Cancer, Research



A group of Saudi breast cancer specialists, led by Dr. Suad bin Amer of the Breast Cancer Research Unit at King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh, has just returned from a highly successful exchange visit to the United States. During their two-week stay, the group traveled, with other women's health care professionals from the United Arab Emirates, to Washington, Baltimore and Houston for extensive consultations with their American counterparts on how best to promote breast cancer awareness and research.

Their program in the U.S. was organized in cooperation with the State Department - the Office of the Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs together with the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). The itinerary included attendance at the 2006 Mission Conference of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation in Arlington, Virginia, just outside Washington.



At that conference, First Lady Laura Bush announced on June 12 a new "U.S.-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research" that will work to inform women in both America and the Middle East about the disease. The new partnership, the first such collaborative effort in the Middle East to work toward prevention and ultimately a cure for this disease, will link groups from the U.S., Saudi Arabia and the UAE working together on breast cancer awareness and research. Discussions are underway to expand the partnership to include other Middle Eastern countries, including Jordan and Morocco.

Mrs. Anita Oberwetter, wife of the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia James C. Oberwetter, and a health care professional herself, has long been an active supporter of this new initiative, working to promote greater contact between Americans and Saudis on women's health issues - and has praised the work of her Saudi colleagues in the new partnership:

"Under the vision and leadership of Dr. Suad Bin Amer, many women and their families in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have already received excellent care, guidance, and treatment of breast cancer. By confronting the challenge of breast cancer together, and by this initiative, we will share knowledge and resources to save more women's lives . . . because my mother survived breast cancer, I personally understand how sensitive and important this is for all women and for their family members."

Mrs. Oberwetter is also pleased with her own country's role: "The United States is very proud to be a partner in the first major regional women's health campaign supporting women by promoting awareness and research."

The U.S.-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research is uniting health care professionals from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with leading U.S. counterpart organizations, including the Dallas, Texas-based Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center of Houston, Texas, and the Johns Hopkins University Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland. These partners will collaborate and develop awareness campaigns designed for each country to increase research, training, and community outreach efforts. The partnership aims to help women gain the knowledge and confidence needed to take charge of their own health.